

## **Questions and Answers about the Central Idaho RAC and the SRS ACT**

RAC = Resource Advisory Committee

SRS Act = Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act

Title II = Title II of the SRS Act

DFO = Designated Federal Office – Salmon-Challis National Forest Supervisor

### **What kinds of projects can be funded with Title II funds?**

Title II funds can be used to provide benefits to Forest lands through projects that maintain existing infrastructure (including roads, and trails), enhance forest ecosystem health, restore and improve land health and streams, watersheds, and water quality. Also mentioned in the SRS Act are restoration and maintenance of wildlife and fish habitat, soils, the control of noxious weeds and the reestablishment of native species. The SRS Act also allows the funding of other projects consistent with the Forest Plans.

### **Who Can Propose Projects for Title II funding?**

One of the purposes of the SRS Act is “to improve cooperative relationships among— the people that use and care for Federal land and the agencies that manage the Federal land.”

To help improve cooperative relationships the Central Idaho RAC will accept proposals from anyone interested in projects to be located on the National Forest System Lands in Butte, Custer, and Lemhi Counties or projects that would benefit the resources on those lands. The Forests lands include all of the Salmon-Challis National Forest in Custer and Lemhi Counties, portions of the Sawtooth National Forest in Custer County and portions of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest in Lemhi and Butte Counties. The Forest Service proposes many RAC projects each year. State and local governments, private and nonprofit entities and landowners and other persons may also submit project proposals to the RAC.

### **Where can the Title II projects be located?**

Most of the Central Idaho RAC projects have been located on the National Forest System Lands mentioned above. The RAC can also recommend projects on non-Federal land where the projects would benefit the resources on the National Forest. The Central Idaho RAC has recommended projects on private lands that were located adjacent to or nearby National Forest System Lands and the project provided direct benefits to the resources on the Forest.

### **Who will do the work?**

Once a project is recommended by the RAC and approved by the DFO (the Forest Supervisor) it becomes a federal project with the Forest Service managing the project. In addition, project funds may be used by the Forest Service for the purpose of entering into and implementing cooperative agreements with willing Federal agencies, State and local governments, private and nonprofit entities, to accomplish the projects. These projects are subject to all federal rules regarding grants and agreements, contracting, fiscal management and resource management, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

### **What about local jobs?**

One of the purposes of the SRS Act is to create additional employment opportunities through Title II projects. The Central Idaho RAC is very interested in projects that will help sustain the local economy with jobs for youth and adults, private and agency people; and partnerships with agencies, local governments,

landowners and private individuals and groups. The RAC can also approve projects that do not necessarily provide direct economic benefits.

### **When can we apply for possible project funding?**

RAC Project Preview forms can be submitted to the RAC at any time. The RAC has established three funding cycles or time frames for reviewing and recommending projects for funding: November 2009 – May 2010 for Fiscal Year 2010, June 2010 – January 2011 for Fiscal Year 2011, and February 2011 – September 2011 for Fiscal Year 2012.

The RAC schedules meetings to review and approve projects with deadlines one week prior to the meeting for submitting project forms. Project forms submitted after the deadline will be presented at the following RAC meeting. Forms submitted after the final deadline of the funding cycle will not be presented to the RAC, but will be reviewed in the following funding cycle.

### **How Does the RAC approve projects?**

The Central Idaho RAC meets to review the “Project Preview” forms (short form) that have been submitted. They check to see if the project meets the requirements for Title II funding outlined above. The RAC may request clarifications or more information from prospective grantees or they may make suggestions. Projects that clearly do not meet the requirements of the SRS Act may be rejected.

Proponents of projects that meet the basic requirements will be asked to fill out the detailed “Project Proposal” form (long form) to be submitted at the next RAC meeting. The RAC may waive the need for the Project Preview form for projects that are re-submissions of previously approved projects.

The RAC meets to review the Project Proposal forms in order to determine how well projects meet the requirements and purposes of the SRS Act. Proponents may be given the opportunity to give a brief presentation and answer RAC questions about the project.

Following an analysis of all the projects, the RAC members compare, discuss and deliberate the merits of the projects and vote to decide which projects to recommend to the Forest Supervisor/DFO. Each project recommended must receive a majority of votes from each of the three RAC community interest categories (a total of at least nine votes – with three votes in each category). The RAC cannot conduct business unless it has a full quorum (at least three members present from each RAC category).

This process may be repeated through a number of meetings until the RAC has recommended at least enough projects to expend the available Title II funds for the Funding Cycle of the fiscal year. *Projects submitted late in the Funding Cycle are less likely to be funded than those submitted early.* Projects approved by the RAC may be resubmitted in the following Funding Cycle.

### **What does the Forest Service do with the RAC recommendations?**

After the RAC recommends the projects the DFO reviews the project proposals to ensure that each project complies with all applicable federal laws and regulations, is consistent with the Forest Plan(s), and has been properly approved by the RAC. The DFO must also ensure that the project will improve the maintenance of existing infrastructure and meet the resource purposes of the SRS Act.

The DFO can either approve or reject any project. If the DFO approves and signs the project agreement the project becomes a federal action and the Forest Service implements the project or oversees completion of the project through contracts, and cooperative agreements.

**Where does the Title II money come from?**

Lemhi, Custer, and Butte counties receive annual payments through the SRS Act to be used for schools and road maintenance. They are each required to allocate at least 15 percent or up to 20 percent of their payments to projects under Title II or Title III of the SRS Act or a combination of the two. The Title II funding is used to fund the projects recommend by the RAC and approved by the DFO. Title III funding is used by the counties for reimbursement for search and rescue on National Forest System Lands and fire prevention. The amount available to the RAC for projects each year depends on the overall percent each county allocates (15 to 20 percent) and what percentage they allocate to Title II. The title II funds are distributed through the Forest Service.

**Can other additional funds be used for Title II projects?**

Yes. Forest Service funds can be used for projects on National Forest System lands that meet Forest Service funding guidelines. Participating counties or other persons may propose to pool project funds or other funds and jointly fund projects or groups of projects. Title II funds do NOT require matching funds. However, Title II funds cannot be used as matching money against federal grants that do require a match.